

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Bob Roberts**

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Interviewer: Diane L. Ware

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Comments: Interviewed at St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Sugar Land, Texas.

7 Pages



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Bob Roberts and Pat Pollicoff

Transcript

WARE: Today's date is January 30, 2010. This interview of Mr. Bob Roberts is being recorded for the Fort Bend County Historical Commission. And we're recording today at St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Sugar Land.

WARE: Okay, let's start with some biographical information. When and where were you born?

ROBERTS: I was born in Houston. It's St. Joseph's Hospital, February 7, 1929.

WARE: You have a birthday coming up.

ROBERTS: Yes, I do.

WARE: When did you move to Fort Bend County or to Sugar Land?

ROBERTS: In 1972, in I guess January.

WARE: Why did you move out here?

ROBERTS: Well, I married Wynell Laperouse.

WARE: She wouldn't live anywhere else?

ROBERTS: No, she wasn't living here either. Actually I moved her out here when we were going together. She was working. She had divorced her first husband and I had divorced my wife. We met in the Al-Anon, AA program and she had moved away from Houston I had found out and then ran into her again accidentally in October of 1970 at the Royal Coach Inn on the Southwest Freeway. I was working for Brown & Sharpe Manufacturing at that time. I put one of our principals in there to stay and I turned around and she walked across the lobby. And I hollered at her. And I said, "Wyn, how is Walter?" And she said, "I don't know, we're divorced." She said, "How is Mary?" I said, "I don't know, we're divorced." (Ware chuckles) I said, "Well, I'll give you a call and we'll get together." And I didn't. But I ran into her again at a New Year's Eve party of an Al-Anon couple that we had known. She was there when I got there. And I said to myself, I said the good Lord is putting you together and we started going together. And she had four children at home. She had six but she had four [at home]. Mine had grown. I had four children and mine had already grown.

WARE: Right.

ROBERTS: She was living in on Bissonnet working at Royal Coach. The oldest two boys were giving her a fit. And I said we gonna have to get you and those kids back out to Sugar Land someplace. And I told her to get the paper and find someplace. I had to go out of town for a few days on business. And I talked to her a couple of days later and she had found this place out, actually where Sartartia Plantation was. It still is but it's all grown up around it now.

WARE: Right.

ROBERTS: It was a brand new home and the gentleman had built it his way. His company had gone bankrupt and he had gone to work for Sartartia, Citorio Petroleum over in San Antonio. We leased the house and I moved her and the kids out there. I had an apartment on Westheimer. And then a year later we got married. (chuckles)

WARE: So, did Sugar Land prove a good place for her to finish raising the children?

ROBERTS: Oh yeah! It's a wonderful place to live. There's not another city like Sugar Land in this country. I guess the finest place to bring your family.

WARE: How so?

ROBERTS: I guess it's the company town it was. And of course now grown where it's not anymore, but the roots...we've had wonderful mayors here. And they've done a good job of keeping this town, and we don't have a lot of trouble.

WARE: Did you know anyone else that lived in Sugar Land before you moved back in?

ROBERTS: No, no. I was born and raised in the east end of Houston by Blessed Sacrament parish.

WARE: That was my next question. Are you a member of any church?

ROBERTS: Yeah, St. Theresa in Sugar Land.

WARE: (laughing) How long have you been a member here at St. Theresa's.

ROBERTS: Since we moved here. In '72.

WARE: Tell me a little bit about St. Therasas and the different activities that you're involved in here.

ROBERTS: I ended up, oh about four or five years being bazaar chairman and a co-

chairman with a couple of gentlemen, John Cathey, who has passed away now was a wonderful family man that lived here. He had moved from another parish. I knew he had some experience at that parish in bazaars and I asked him to help. We did good.

WARE: It's a great bazaar (chuckles)

ROBERTS: This is a great parish and wonderful people.

WARE: Is the St. Theresa's bazaar pretty typical of a church bazaar?

ROBERTS: Basically I think it is. Every church has their different things that they do but we all have the responsibility to try to make some money to help the church! I guess number of different religions have those things too. But I guess the Catholics enjoy partying a little bit with bingo and all the other things we do.

WARE: How, how do you think the St. Theresa's bazaar is different from other bazaars.

ROBERTS: Well they've condensed it to everything; the equipment, the electronics that are involved in putting on the various booths and everything. It's a lot better. Yeah we had to store and tear it down and we had to work (chuckles) hard to get it all put together and back into the box, little storage areas. Of course, we rented tents back then too and still do but not like we had back then.

WARE: The first house that you had was that at out near Sartartia? Is that where you live still? Is that still your home?

ROBERTS: No, no, she moved in there from about six months before we married. And then I moved in with her out there with the kids. And then the guy called us and told us that they were gonna come home. We leased for a year with the understanding if he didn't work out over in San Antonio where they had moved... It was a brand new home we moved into. And it was ideal for Wyn and the boys because they were in the country good for 'um. And then when they came back we...Covington Woods was just developing and we found a place to move to out there.

We bought it and then at that time we met a realtor family that went to this church. But anyway Wynell got into the real estate and got her license. And we were in that house in Covington about two and a half to three years. When we bought it appraised at was eleven thousand dollars more and we picked up a foreclosure out there in Covington and sold our place and moved into that.

She was gonna fix it up and then we were gonna sell it and do something else. And about that time why, Ray Youngblood, who owned a house at 610 Lakeview Street, here in Sugar Land, worked for Gray Tool Company and he was in Scotland running their plant over there and they'd come back for Christmas. And they called us and told us that right after the first [New Year's of '75] they wanted to talk to Wynell about selling the place. It was only two doors from her mother and father.

ROBERTS: Robert and Donna Laperouse. They told us what they for it and I looked at Wynell and said (laughs) I said, "Well we're gonna buy it from you. I'll get a loan on it." And Ray says, "No. I'll carry it, I'll carry the note for you and you won't have to worry about that." And I said, "Well that sounds like a good deal."

WARE: That's a good deal.

ROBERTS: We went ahead and made the deal. And we moved in on Lakeview and that April the first '75, we closed and moved in and still live there now. Of course my wife has deceased. She passed in September of 2007.

WARE: Do you know the history of the house?

ROBERTS: Not really. It was one of the houses on Cleveland Lake that Imperial Sugar bought...sold those lots to people who had administrative positions - office people with the company.

WARE: Right.

ROBERTS: And she worked, I think ran the insurance department for 'em and Ray of course was with Gray. Next door to us on the left side at 608 was the Phillips. Mama Phillips, her husband had passed. He ran the railroad for Imperial from Galveston to Sugar Land when they were bringing the ships in there and unloading. I guess they still do. But anyway that's how she got the lot and built the house that they lived in.

WARE: Right. If someone said, "What's the favorite thing that ever happened when you lived in Sugar Land?" What would it be?

ROBERTS: Greatest thing that ever happened was us two...me and Wynell. (laughter) We moved the children here on the lake and it's a beautiful place to be. It's a lovely lake. It's quiet. They're building some multi-million dollar homes across the lake now.

WARE: Right!

ROBERTS: And unfortunately with her passing it's too big for me to keep fooling with.

WARE: Right.

ROBERTS: I am not gonna leave St. Theresa parish.

WARE: Good

ROBERTS: It's a wonderful place, wonderful people here in Sugar Land.

WARE: I think they'd miss you if you left St. Theresa's parish. (laughs) What, what are some other things that are, that you and Wyn and even the boys and all got to do in Sugar Land.

ROBERTS: We fished a lot. My wife loved to fish and I do too and I hunt. She didn't hunt, didn't do it. But the kids are big fishermen. It was good to raise them here nice, nice schools here and quiet and not a lot of crime.

WARE: Where did they fish locally?

ROBERTS: We fished in Cleveland Lake. Right in my backyard.

On my boat/pier deck mainly. But we'd go to Galveston and Freeport. One of my stepsons, Mike Wappler, he has a place in Rockport and she'd love to go down there with Mike and Dixon Berry one of his sons. John is gonna get, get married on March 13th next month after next.

ROBERTS: Recreation here was fishing and working around the church. And she, she was involved with Theresans. She was their first president...the Theresans Society, it's a Catholic women's organization. She was involved with that and of course she, had quit real estate after we moved, a few years after we moved into Lakeview. And I was doing a little better too. I had been working for Brown and Sharpe Manufacturing, then I started my own company and hired out my services. I sell measuring equipment primarily for the metal working industry in Houston and South Texas. And I've gone back to doing that actually the first of last year. And it keeps me busy. I call on a lot of small accounts, but I know of lot of people. And I enjoy being out with them.

WARE: Right! That's a good thing to do. Once you got to Sugar Land, how did you find things like medical care? Was the medical care more or less available or did you notice?

ROBERTS: Well, I had been going to Medical Clinic of Houston right there by Rice University.

WARE: Was there good medical care here in the Sugar Land area?

ROBERTS: Oh yes! I didn't go to many doctors. But they have now. We've got hospitals (chuckles). We're overflowed with them.

WARE: After you moved out to Sugar Land did you shop in Sugar Land or did you go back into Houston to shop?

ROBERTS: We'd shop primarily in Sugar Land and close around here. We, if we had to go before we had the malls here we'd go into Foleys on the Southwest Freeway there.

WARE: Sharpstown?

ROBERTS: Yeah Sharpstown. Of course I worked around Houston and Sugar Land too.

WARE: Right.

ROBERTS: And actually Schlumberger has been one of my best customers over the years. And I still do quite well with them again.

WARE: And they're very close by. (laughs)

ROBERTS: I have a couple of guys that I've been working with over the years at the quality control department. They've been very good to me.

WARE: What things have I not asked you that you want to tell me about living in Sugar Land?

ROBERTS: Well, there's not another place that I'm aware of that has the small town atmosphere. It has retained it. And even though we are getting bigger and bigger most of us that have been here I guess and still have our friends and it is kind of close knit. And it hadn't changed much in 36 years. So it's still pretty, pretty much like it was. We have our friends and it's just a great place to raise your family.

WARE: You've covered it so. Thank you.

Interview ends.